PSYCHOSOMATICS: IS THE BRIDGE OVER THE GULF EXISTING BETWEEN PSYCHIATRY AND PHYSIOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that modern society is beginning to know and fear the psychopath, not truly insane, outwardly normal in most respects, but the victim of a neurosis. Such people exert a malignant influence on our daily existence. They exert a disruptive force that foments disorder and turbulence. They exist among our friends and acquaintances. They, like the poor, are always with us.

Neurosis is baffling. Psychiatry has made giant strides since Sigmund Freud, but the greatest psyhciatrist cannot and does not guarantee to cure a stubborn neurosis. The family physician as such has almost ceased to exist; people now go to specialists for their illnesses. There has until now been no specialist for the psychoneurotic outside the expensive, tedious and painful field of psychiatry.

However, there is a school of progressive thought which has produced certain hitherto guessed-at facts, has invented a machine to measure the brain, has studied and perfected ways and means of discovering the CAUSES of neuroses. In the following chapters these advances shall be technically discussed.

The purpose of this introduction is to point out that a neurosis can be treated at home, or by consultation with authorities who have made these studies. It is not necessary to resort to surgery, or to torture oneself by prying into already ruffled emotions. It is possible to control these causes of neurosis from the outside, to do so with little cost, by close attention to the latest scientific discoveries.

Of the thousands of neurotics now in the world and the untold numbers more the war will engender, some will benefit by reading these pages and those of the booklets to follow. If there is no real "cure," there is surcease for the afflicted. That is what will be offered, some abatement of the disorders, some understanding of the problems of the baffling vagaries of the wayward mind. If a marriage can be saved, a man or woman restored to the useful benefit of society, this work will not have been undertaken in vain.

being used as a crutch. Truthfully, symptoms of alcohol would be observed in these cases whether or not alcohol had been used.

Addiction to aldehyde is another little known factor in this problem. Quite often the body can metabolize alcohol without bad effects. The cerebral vessels can compensate without being damaged. But the alcohol drug, aldehyde, narcotizes the body cells and the victim becomes a candidate for treatment by qualified experts.

Damage to the cerebral vessels of the addict requires a bit more explanation. It is a serious thing and is caused by the compensation of the cerebral vessels necessary in the metabolism of alcohol.

There is a cluster of nerves at the medulla of the brain which is called the respiratory center. Its function is to send electrical impulses to the muscles of respiration which allow us to breathe and live. If the respiratory center is out of order the organs controlled by it are also affected and will not perform properly.

Control of respiration is possible by the gases in the blood, of which carbon dioxide is the most important regulating factor. Lack of oxygen can stimulate the respiratory center and both these factors are closely allied with the electrical potential of the brain cells. Normally the brain can regulate this balance, as when the oxygen content of the blood is high ad carbon dioxide is low, the cerebral blood vessels contract, shutting off oxygen until it is again needed by the brain. But metabolism of alcohol taken by an addict affects the brain's ability to regulate this balance.

The brain is composed of white and grey matter which has numerous communicating spaces containing spinal fluid. The circulation of spinal fluid is affected by the circulation of the cerebral blood. Proper circulation must be maintained if the brain is to work properly.

Absorption of too much alcohol, necessitating, severe contraction and expansion of the blood vessels, as explained above, results in damage to this regulatory system. Naturally, this results in an increase in fluid in some parts of the brain and a decrease in other parts, leading to atrophy and edemitis of the hydrated areas and flooding of the cells in the remaining parts. The addict is then afflicted with alcoholic hydrocephalus and is considered not to be a normal person. He suffers from hallucinations, difficulty in breathing, bad digestion, nightmares and palpitations. His personality changes, he is abnormal, because his brain is not functioning, due to damage caused by alcoholism.

This, then, is your "drunkard"—a man who is ill, and who can often be cured.

He may have become an addict due to any one or a combination of the above factors. It may have grown upon him because of a physical condition of which he may not even be aware.

One of his most malignant troubles is due to maladjustment of the regulatory mechanism of the cerebral blood vessels, with its close connection to the fluid balance and electric function of the brain. It is upon these basic facts that his condition must be considered.

Psychosomatics is a "new" science designed to help the person thus afflicted, whether from drinking alcohol or any other causes. It is not a miracle working panacea; it is an earnest attempt to get at the source of the trouble of unfortunate people suffering from mental illness.

It is not enough to discover that a man is ill, or an alcoholic because he has been brooding, to reason with him or attempt to bolster his ego. You may in this manner give him a mild mental catharsis, but you have not cured him. This is true of neurotics, it is true of drunkards. It is necessary to delve deeper and make use of new methods before undertaking treatment of such cases.

For alcoholics, we suggest the immediate consultation of a properly trained practitioner who is familiar with PSYCHOSOMATICS who can have an electroencephalograph and pneumograph made in order to gain a basis upon which he can work.

With the information thus gained at hand, he can give certain drugs to help restore the proper cerebral blood supply, fluid balance, and electrical function of the brain, if necessary he may help to create new emotional reflexes and suggest certain exercises which would help to re-establish cerebral "normalcy."

Where there is also an aldehyde addiction, which is generally the case if the alcoholic has been drinking for any length of time, an antidote is given.

The drunkard of yesterday is today's sick man. He should be treated as such, tenderly cared for by experienced practitioners.